

Confirmation of Will Oldfield to the Ministry: July 13, 2002



Thrust Statement: When one preaches the word of truth, he or she is proclaiming the gospel, namely, Jesus as God's way of salvation.

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Tonight, this congregation—Oakwood Hills—has assembled in order to confirm its decision to recognize Will Oldfield's resolution to devote himself to the service of God in a public fashion of preaching and teaching. Even though there are many texts that this congregation could call attention to in admonishing Will about his responsibilities in his service to the Lord, yet there is one Scripture that stands out—a Scripture that rings a clarion call. This Scripture is none other than Paul's words found in **2 Timothy 4:2**—“preach the word.” This study of **Second Timothy 4:1-2** is to remind Will Oldfield of his responsibilities as a teacher within the new humanity created by our Lord Jesus Christ. One could title this message: “The Oakwood Hills’ Charge to Will Oldfield: Preach the Word.” Tonight, Will Oldfield is receiving the blessings of the Oakwood Hills church as he is officially selected by the congregation to assume the role of teacher in his work with the congregation. Not everyone aspires to teach in a public way, but for those who do, such as Will Oldfield, the congregation should support him in this endeavor. It is in this regard that Paul addresses the congregation at Corinth. He writes the following words about those who have embarked on the path of responsibility to the saints:

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers,¹⁶ to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.¹⁷ I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus

arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸ For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition (**1 Corinthians 16:15-18**).^[1]

When one undertakes the responsibility of pastoring a congregation, one assumes great accountability in such a charge. Not only is one responsible for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but also one is accountable for maintaining himself as an example to all believers. Every leader is to set forth himself as a model of imitation for everyone to pattern his/her life after. One who leads, writes Paul, “must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful” (**2 Timothy 2:24**).

Will Oldfield, this congregation reminds you that as you devote yourself to the service of the saints, you must assume these three characteristics set forth by Paul in his farewell letter to Timothy—“be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.” These are basic qualifications. If one is lacking in these qualifications, he is not going to make the kind of leader who can lead the people of God in the most effective way to bring honor to God. As one embarks upon the ministry, one should bear in mind that the goal of every leader is to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Again, the congregation exhorts you also to remember some of the negatives as well as the positives of true leadership. Paul writes to Titus the following traits that should be adopted and the traits that should not be adopted:

Since an overseer^b is entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it (**Titus 1:7-9**).

The words in **verse 9**—“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught”—are calling attention to the necessity of being true to the Gospel, that is, God’s way of salvation. This is the substance of Paul’s charge to Timothy in **2 Timothy 4:2**—“preach the word.” Will Oldfield, even though you are not being appointed as an “overseer,” nevertheless, you are being appointed as a leader and preacher and teacher of God’s Word. You are being “entrusted with God’s work”; therefore, this congregation requests that you carefully and prayerfully seek to adopt or put on these qualifications, as listed in **Titus 1:7-9**, in your desire to devote yourself to the service of the saints. Remember, any individual who undertakes the ministry of the Word, as a preacher and teacher, should be conscious of the dignity of the ministry. One should view the ministry as a glorious privilege to serve Christ. Paul felt something of this privilege when he wrote to the Ephesians:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this

mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things ([Ephesians 1:7-9](#)).

Just as Paul became a servant of the Gospel of Christ as a result of God's grace, so, too, those who have undertaken a ministry of preaching should also reflect upon their gift of God's grace. There is a sense in which every preacher or teacher is a steward of the mysteries of God. It is in this regard that Paul writes about those proclaiming the Good News of God's way of salvation: "So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God.² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" ([1 Corinthians 4:1-2](#)).

Yes, there is a sense in which the Gospel of Christ is entrusted to those who are instructors in the Word. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, writes about the glorious Gospel: "the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me" ([1 Timothy 1:11](#)). Then Paul thanks Jesus Christ for such favor: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service" ([1:12](#)). Earlier, Paul, in his farewell to the leaders at Ephesus, explained the troubles that lie ahead for himself, but at the same time, he rejoiced in his privilege of proclaiming the Good News of God:

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace ([Acts 20:23-24](#)).

As one faces hardships in life, one must keep in mind that "testifying to the gospel of God's grace" is what really matters, not one's luxury in life. Paul desired to finish his course with joy. He wanted to run the Christian race with faithfulness and diligence to the very end. In fact, Paul, while awaiting his execution, tells Timothy:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing ([2 Timothy 4:6-8](#)).

Will Oldfield, this same tenacity should be your aim—fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith. Having said this, it goes almost without saying that every Christian, too, is engaged in the Christian race, not just ministers of the Word, that is, those whose lives are dedicated to public service. Listen to Paul as he describes the Christian life:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.²⁶ Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.²⁷ No, I beat my

body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Every evangelist, every teacher, and every leader should strive for the crown of God without wavering. Paul was conscious of his own behavior. Are you conscious of your own behavior? You must control your external behavior. Listen to Paul again: “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” Will Oldfield, this body of believers calls attention to the words of Paul to Timothy in order that you, too, might reflect upon your own actions in your relationship to other believers:

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (**1 Timothy 4:12-16**).

The eyes of everyone in this congregation are on you. Will, you should live in such a way that “everyone may see your progress.” Even though Timothy received a special gift from God, still he was told to be diligent in his every day life to set forth himself as an example so that others, too, could emulate him in his daily walk with God. God has entrusted Paul with the Gospel, and Paul entrusted the Gospel to Timothy, and now Paul wants Timothy to also entrust the Gospel to others:

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Even though every Christian is a minister of this reconciliation, nevertheless, the Scriptures are quite clear that there is a special group of individuals who take the lead in seeking to instruct the people of God. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, writes:

Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other (**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13**).

The words “who work hard among you” can be translated from the Greek text as, “the ones laboring among you” (τοι^Ψ κοπιω^Ψτα^Ω ε^Ψν νΣμο^Ω, tous kopiwtas en Jumas), and the words “over you in the Lord” can be translated as, “taking the lead of you in the Lord” (προι^Ωσταμε^Ψνο^Ω νΣμω^Ων ε^Ψψν κυριψω, proistamenous Jumwn en kuriw). In the first century, God gave certain individuals to the church in order that they in turn could perfect the saints in the work of the ministry. Listen to Paul as he enumerates God’s gifts:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (**Ephesians 4:11-16**).

One responsibility of every teacher is to prepare God's people for "works of service" in order that the body of Christ might be joined and held together as each member does its work to promote the growth of the Christian community. Will Oldfield, it is in this capacity that the Oakwood Hills congregation is selecting you in order that you might help the believers to perform their works of service.

PREACH THE WORD:

THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION

One text that stands out prominently, as mentioned above, in the minds of all who desire to preach and teach the Word of God is **2 Timothy 4:1-5**. Paul, in this pericope, issues a solemn charge to Timothy to preach the Gospel of Christ. Paul sets forth the very kernel of Christian ministry when he pens:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry (**2 Timothy 4:1-5**).

Paul wants Timothy to understand something of the weightiness of his mission. Thus, Paul writes: "I give you this charge" (**4:1**). Paul wants Timothy to recognize something of the gravity of this vocation and, at the same time, to sense the importance of assuming the responsibility of the role of leadership. In order for Paul to call attention to this task, he writes: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge" (**4:1**). Every teacher must reflect upon the fact that one day he will face God and Jesus Christ will judge him. Hopefully, this consciousness of Jesus' judgment will give encouragement to Timothy to keep going, even when one faces daily the trials and

tribulations of life. Paul reinforces the solemnity of this call by calling attention to the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

First and foremost, the charge is to “preach the Word.” The words in the Greek text read: κηρυξον τοῦ λογίου (keruxon ton logon). This phrase connotes the substance of his preaching—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The word *word* stands as a summary for the “Gospel.” This “Word of God” is defined in the beginning of this epistle:

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,⁹ who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.¹¹ And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.¹² That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day (**2 Timothy 1:8-12**).

Paul did not want Timothy to fail to preach the gospel without commitment, even to the point of suffering. But, in addition to his faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel, he also wanted him to entrust the gospel to others who would be “reliable men,” and who also would be “qualified to teach others” (**2:2**). Immediately, Paul gives the substance of the message: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (**2:8**). Earlier, he told Timothy to “Guard (φυλαψσω, p&ulassw) the good deposit (παραθηψκη, paraghkh) that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (**1:14**). Then, he instructs him to “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (**2:15**).

The “word of truth” in **2:15** is the same as the “deposit” in **1:14**. In other words, Paul wants Timothy to defend the Gospel. For a second time, attention is called to the citation in **1:14**, because there is a charge to Timothy to guard the Gospel. Then, in **2:3, 8-9**, he charges Timothy to suffer for the Gospel. Over again, in **3:3-14**, he instructs him to continue in the gospel. As one reflects upon the Scriptures, one can hardly overlook Paul’s sketch of the Gospel in **1:8-10**. In **1:8-10**, Paul reveals that the gospel is an account of not so much of what Christ has done, even though it is that, as it is of what God has done “in” and “through” Christ. Paul presents the same thought in his second letter to Corinth (**5:17-19**). The following is a parallel chart of these two pericopes:

2 Timothy 1:8-10	2 Corinthians 5:17-19
But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the <u>power of God</u> , ⁹ <u>who has saved us</u> and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.	Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! ¹⁸ <u>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ</u> and gave us the ministry of

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

The gospel is the good news of salvation, that is to say, the good news of our savior Jesus Christ. “The word of truth” equals the “gospel,” and the “gospel” is sometimes called salvation, righteousness, mystery, deposit, the word of truth, and life. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, writes: “The faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel” (**Colossians 1:5**). James, too, speaks in this fashion: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (**James 1:18**).

Paul, in writing to the Christians at Ephesus, says: “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation (**Ephesians 1:13**). Also, in the **Book of Ephesians**, he defines the Gospel as the “mystery of his will” (**1:9**). The word *mystery* occurs seven times in this short epistle. This “mystery” is about God’s scheme of redemption “in” and “through” Christ. In fact, in the Colossian letter, Paul expresses it this way:

Colossians 1:25-28	Colossians 2:2-5
<p>I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of <u>this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.</u></p>	<p>My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, <u>in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ</u>, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.</p>

Just a perusal of the **Book of Ephesians** reveals that the Gospel is about how God creates one people, which consists of both Jew and Gentile reconciled unto God in “one body” by the “one Spirit.” In other words there is a new humanity in Jesus. All barriers have been broken down (**2:11-22**). All racial barriers are gone (see also **Galatians 3:26-29**). When the angelic host sung a song about the gospel of God, they sung about how God had purchased all men to God through His shed blood. Listen to John as he records

this event as he listened in on this wonderful revelation:

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits ^a of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (**Revelation 6:10**).

This is what the Gospel of God has accomplished—redemption for “every tribe and language and people and nation.” God through Jesus reconciled the world unto Himself. This is a part of the mystery that had been hidden from ages past. No wonder Paul tells Timothy: “Preach the word.” One can hardly read Paul’s last letter without a consciousness of the importance of the Gospel in one’s walk with God. Paul instructed Timothy to guard the Gospel that had been entrusted to him: “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (**2 Timothy 1:14**). Prior to this exhortation, Paul employs the words “sound teaching” to describe the Gospel (**1:13**). For Paul, the Gospel is both a pattern ($\nu\Sigma\pi\tau\psi\pi\omega\sigma\iota$, &upotupwsis) of sound words (**1:13**) and a precious deposit (**1:14**).

Paul refers to himself as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the gospel, or good deposit entrusted to him: “And of this gospel I was appointed a herald ($\kappa\eta\rho\sigma\acute{\epsilon}$, khru ξ) and an apostle ($\alpha\varsigma\pi\omega\sigma\tau\omega\acute{\epsilon}$, apostolos) and a teacher ($\delta\iota\delta\alpha\psi\sigma\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\epsilon}$, didaskalos)” (**1:11**). Christians frequently distinguish between $\kappa\eta\rho\sigma\gamma\mu\omega$ (khrugma, “what is preached: the message, or proclamation”) and $\delta\iota\delta\alpha\chi\eta\psi$ (didach, “what is taught”). This distinction is helpful, but it can be overstated. In the words of John W. Stott: “There was a lot of didach in the khrugma and a lot of khrugma in the didach.”^[2] Even though one proclaims the message of salvation, nevertheless, one also teaches about the implications of the gospel and the moral ethical behavior that results from one’s acceptance of Jesus as one’s Lord. Every khrugma must itself contain much didach.

Every one who preaches and teaches should bear in mind that the Gospel is a treasure placed in earthen vessels, that is “entrusted to your care” (**1 Timothy 6:20, 2 Timothy 2:14**). The Gospel was deposited with Paul; Paul deposited the gospel with Timothy; and it can be said today that the Gospel is deposited with the church. When one undertakes the responsibility of shepherding the flock of God, one should always remember that God, as it were, has deposited in that individual the responsibility of preaching the gospel that Paul preached (see **Galatians 1:6-9**). There are many Christians today who are bent on perverting the Gospel of God, that is to say, proclaiming another way of salvation other than by faith in Jesus.

There is a sense of urgency in the proclamation and teaching of the gospel. To

“preach the word” (4:2) is equivalent to “the deposit” (1:14), “sound doctrine” (4:3), “the truth” (4:4), and “the faith” (4:7). No one has the right to change God’s way of salvation. Thus, there is an urgency of tone in this last letter of Paul to Timothy: “be prepared in season and out of season” (4:2). The words “be prepared” are from the Greek word εξφύστημι (ep&isthmi), which literally means to “stand by.” In other words, he is telling Timothy to always be on hand, or be ready, to preach the word. He does not want Timothy to ever overlook his sense of urgency in preaching Jesus. Then Paul adds: “in season and out of season” (4:2). Paul is encouraging to Timothy to always press home the message of salvation on all occasions—convenient or inconvenient. This statement is not an excuse for rudeness, but rather a biblical appeal against laziness. God wants his preachers to be on duty all the time. Paul does not want Timothy to fail to remember his sense of urgency—neither should preachers and teachers relax in this sense of urgency to proclaim Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Will Oldfield, the congregation at Oakwood Hills reminds you that one should always be cautious that one does not preach to elevate himself, but rather one should preach in order to glorify God. Paul writes: “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5). This congregation calls attention to the words of Paul in his farewell discourse to the Ephesian Elders; in his closing remarks, he calls attention to his faithfulness in preaching the gospel: “For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God” (Acts 20:27). The gospel, too, was to be Timothy’s lifework. In spite of defection on the part of many, Paul warns Timothy: “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5). This congregation also encourages you to “do the work of an evangelist” and to “discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

The Good News of God should be constantly on your mind, just as it was to be on the mind of Timothy. Just as Timothy was told to “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (2:8), so the saints at Oakwood Hills also encourage you to reflect upon these words as you seek to serve in God’s kingdom. Timothy was to spurn no part of his ministry for God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. Yes, every modern day minister of God should also remember Paul’s admonition to Timothy—“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel.”

What if things do not go well in your ministry? How should you react if things in your ministry do not always go well? The answer to these two questions lies in the words of Paul to Timothy, “keep your head in all situations” and still “discharge all your duties of ministry.” As a minister you must teach. You are called to teach. You must be a strong teacher. You must not waiver in your duties. In concluding this message, the words of Paul to Timothy, in his first letter, should ring loud and clear in your ears:

Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.¹⁴ Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic

message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.¹⁵ Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.¹⁶ Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (**1 Timothy 4:12-16**).

^[1] All Scripture citations are from the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), unless stated otherwise.

^[2] John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1973), 42.